11-15-68

ERIC REPORT RESUME

ERIC ACC. NO. ED 034 083			
CH ACC. NO. AA 000 443	**P.A.**	**PUBL. DATE** 69	**ISSUE** RIEAPR70

IS DOCUMENT COPYRIGHTED? YES ☐ NO ☒
ERIC REPRODUCTION RELEASE? YES ☐ NO ☒
LEVEL OF AVAILABILITY I ☒ II ☐ III ☐

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TITLE

Research for School Board Members: School-Community Relations. PREP-VII.

SOURCE CODE	**INSTITUTION (SOURCE)**
XIE86100	Tennessee Univ., Knoxville

SP. AG. CODE	**SPONSORING AGENCY**
RMQ66015 RMQ66004	

EDRS PRICE	**CONTRACT NO.**	**GRANT NO.**
0.25;2.70		

REPORT NO.	**BUREAU NO.**
PREP-7	

AVAILABILITY

JOURNAL CITATION

DESCRIPTIVE NOTE
52p.

DESCRIPTORS
*Educational Research; *Community Relations; *Community Support; *School Community Relationship; *Boards of Education; School Administration; Communication (Thought Transfer); School Support; Educational Planning; Public Relations

IDENTIFIERS

ABSTRACT
This kit of ten documents treats in capsule form some of the more critical and immediate problems and responsibilities confronting school boards. The purpose of the study was to collect, synthesize and interpret the very latest research for school board members. The topics covered were identified as critical and timely areas of concern by an Advisory Committee of persons selected for their work with school boards throughout the country. The following topics are treated in this kit: (No. 7-A) Communicating With the Public; (No. 7-B) Public Expectations of Boards of Education; (No. 7-C) Public Opinions of the Schools; (No. 7-D) Community Support for Education: Elections Involving School Issues; (No. 7-E) Joint Endeavors of the Community and School; (No. 7-F) Approaches to School-Community Relations; (No. 7-G) Mass Media in School-Community Relations; (No. 7-H) Evaluation of School Public Relations Programs; (No. 7-I) School and Community Conflict; (No. 7-J) Current Research for School Board Members. The project was conducted by Dr. Dewey H. Stollar at the University of Tennessee. A related document is ED 034 084. (ON)

ED 034 083

PREP

RESEARCH
FOR
SCHOOL BOARD
MEMBERS--

School-
Community
Relations

No. 7

PREP is . . .

- *a synthesis and interpretation of research, development, and current practice on a specific educational topic*
- *a method of getting significant R&D findings to the practitioner quickly*
- *the best thinking of researchers interpreted by specialists in simple language*
- *the focus of research on current educational problems*
- *a format which can be easily and inexpensively reproduced for wide distribution*
- *raw material in the public domain which can be adapted to meet local needs*
- *an attempt to improve our Nation's schools through research*
- P *utting*
  R *esearch into*
  E *ducational*
  P *ractice*

School board members come from a variety of backgrounds, and for most of them the school board role is only a part-time obligation. Because of their many other responsibilities, they do not have the time--nor in some cases the skill--to read long, technical research reports for information upon which to base their policy decisions. Yet they need such information lest they be forced to make important decisions based solely upon how a neighboring community handled a similar problem or situation--if even this information is available to them.

An interpretive studies project was funded by the Bureau of Research of the Office of Education to collect, synthesize, and interpret the latest research for school board members. The project was conducted by Dr. Dewey H. Stollar at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; and this kit contains some of the reports emanating from the project. The reports treat in capsule form some of the more critical and immediate problems and responsibilities confronting school boards, as identified by an Advisory Committee of persons selected for their work with school boards throughout the country. The following topics are treated in this kit:

- *Communicating With the Public* - No. 7-A
- *Public Expectations of Boards of Education* - No. 7-B
- *Public Opinion of the Schools* - No. 7-C
- *Community Support for Education: Elections Involving School Issues* - No. 7-D
- *Joint Endeavors of the Community and School* - No. 7-E
- *Approaches to School-Community Relations* - No. 7-F
- *Mass Media in School-Community Relations* - No. 7-G
- *Evaluation of School Public Relations Programs* - No. 7-H
- *School and Community Conflict* - No. 7-I
- *Current Research for School Board Members* - No. 7-J

Reports on research for school board members in other areas will be released periodically by PREP from this project.

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PREP

No. 7-A

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COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC

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Communicating with the public about school affairs is a major responsibility of every board of education. While some school systems can get along for a while without it, sooner or later a controversy will arise which cannot be dealt with effectively without adequate communication. A continuing program of communication should be developed not only because it is an asset to the school system, but also because the public has a right to be informed about their schools.

The agency which citizens expect to keep them informed is the one which represents them in school matters--the board of education. To discharge its obligation to the public, the school board needs to understand some of the questions involved in communicating with the public and to develop a program or strategy of communication based on the best answers research can provide to these questions.

Questions

1. How do schools communicate with the public?
2. What factors hinder effective communication with the public?
3. What are the major faults of present communication programs?
4. What are the more effective means of mass communication?
5. What communication factors relate to how people vote in school elections?

6. What information about the schools do voters want?

7. Who do people turn to for information about the schools?

8. Through what channels does school information flow?

9. Who communicates informally about school matters?

10. How effective is informal communication?

11. How do school officials feel about their part in communicating with the public?

12. What strategy can a school system employ to communicate more effectively with the public?

Review of Studies

In a study designed to obtain knowledge about the flow of information and influence in informal communication about schools (2), conversations dealing with school matters were reconstructed. Beginning with a sample of 50 households in five school districts, interviews were expanded to include each person named as having been involved in a conversation about the schools. In all, over 2,000 conversations were reconstructed and each respondent was scored on various aspects of the conversations.

Orientation toward schools. Two indications of respondents' interest in school affairs used in the study were parent viewpoint and citizen viewpoint. A person who viewed the schools from the standpoint of a citizen had a commitment of interest in public affairs in general. Persons with parent viewpoints were interested in the schools primarily because they had children in attendance. A number of persons expressed both viewpoints. Persons who had strong viewpoints of either type and especially persons with both viewpoints were most likely to engage in communication about the schools. Persons who did not tend to look at the schools from either viewpoint and who had lived in the school district only a short time were least likely to talk about schools.

Informal communication. The amount of informal communication a person engaged in was directly related to his interest in school matters. The greater his interest in school affairs, the more he talked informally about them. The schools might capitalize on this fact by attempting to identify persons who are highly interested in school affairs and supplying them information about the schools. Informal communication about schools was greater among women than among men. Persons who had been exposed to information about the schools through group meetings or the mass media tended to engage in informal communication to a greater degree than did persons who had not been so exposed (2).

Flow of influence. Persons with parent viewpoints and citizen viewpoints attempted to influence others more often and succeeded more often than other types of persons. Persons having only one of the two viewpoints attempted to influence more often, but success was more highly related to persons having both viewpoints. Among both school parents and school employees, those who held moderate opinions were most likely to be successful in influencing others. "Influence occurs largely between similar types of persons. Those persons who try to influence others to more extreme views of the schools or those who try to influence persons at a different level of knowledge than themselves are generally without success (2)."

Irrelevancy of communication common. To be effective, communication about the schools must be relevant to the situation at hand. In Carter's study (2), the situation was an election concerned with school funds, but about half the conversations studied included other school-related topics which were irrelevant to the election. For this reason Carter noted that "many election decisions are not on the issues stated for the referendum," but rather "votes are cast on seemingly irrelevant issues." He went on to suggest that "the answers may be to increase the number and quality of formal relationships. If there were a formal discussion and review of each major issue, then the dangerous contamination of irrelevancy might be avoided."

To insure relevancy, Carter suggested a process of formal review of school-related topics. The interested person should be made aware of each stage of the review process, should know who he is to contact and how he is expected to express his values. The procedure would really be a formalizing of the change process. "If the public can expect a certain set of steps to be taken prior to final review, if it can see when and how to participate, then it may come to understand and support the school's attempts to initiate beneficial changes (2)."

Sources of school information. To discover how schools communicate to voters, the Institute for Communication Research at Stanford conducted a study which involved interviewing 900 registered voters before and after a bond election (21). The study team also interviewed 2,524 registered voters in three urban areas (one in the Southeast, one in the Midwest, and one on the Pacific Coast), 769 staff members in the Midwest school district, and 732 husbands and wives who were both registered voters in another school district. Two-thirds of the voters surveyed indicated that they would turn to school officials for information about the schools. However, only one-third of the sample could name a school official they considered well-informed about school affairs. The voters depended primarily on newspapers and conversations with friends for information about the schools, but they indicated that they would prefer to talk directly with someone representing the schools. The little communication that did occur between voters and school officials at the time of a financial election was passive from the voter's standpoint. The voters listened but did not express their opinion until they did so by voting. Voters who supported the school bond issue were more likely to think of school officials as sources of information and were more likely to have talked to an informed source before the election. These same voters were also more likely to have read school bulletins or to have heard speeches by school representatives.

Areas of public concern. When asked to indicate the subjects about which they desired more information, voters showed greatest concern with curriculum matters. They also wanted more information on how the schools were operated and about teaching methods. There were two types of voters who were most interested in more information about the schools, especially about curriculum. One was the voter who viewed economic conditions as good but the schools as bad, and the other was one who participated actively in school affairs but felt little power to change the situation.

The study concluded that increased information did not influence more voters to vote in bond elections or to vote "yes." In fact, those who wanted curriculum information were least likely to vote "yes." Persons who wanted information in order to do something or to have the "right" information, as well as those who wanted no more information because they were not interested, were not likely to vote or to vote "yes." Persons who felt the subject was of interest or who wanted reassurance as well as those who already knew enough were likely to vote and vote "yes."

Discussions of school affairs among men were most likely to center on school costs, administration, building needs, curriculum, and sports. Among women, the most often discussed topics were students and special programs or events. Men talked primarily with their fellow workmen about school affairs, while women were more likely to talk with someone connected with the schools. Both men and women talked about bond issues in more general terms than either the schools or the newspapers. However, as the election approached, the schools changed their emphasis to the more general aspects of the bond issue.

Existing attitudes more important than communications. The most important factor in determining whether or not the voters would pay attention to school communications seemed to be the existing attitudes of the voters. There was nothing in the study to indicate that communications had any lasting effect on attitudes, other than to reinforce those already held.

Statement of an effective program. Bloom (1) used a group of 30 professional educators to help him develop a list of statements describing an effective public information program. He then used this list to evaluate the effectiveness of present public information programs. Part of the evaluation involved seeking out the opinions of community leaders and employee groups concerning the schools and their communities. The study found that the majority of parents of school children considered themselves well informed about schools, but fewer than half of those with no children in school had this feeling. More than half of the respondents rated the public information programs of the schools as "satisfactory." The study found that the most effective medium for disseminating school news to the community was the local newspaper.

Bloom concluded that the schools were not providing adequate two-way channels of communication that allowed citizens an opportunity to participate in the development of curriculum and in the determination of a philosphy of education for the local schools. Based on this conclusion it was recommended that two-way channels of communication should be maintained so that information could flow freely between the schools and the community. It was also recommended that the schools take steps to interpret the school program to the community in such a way that the people can have an accurate and understandable picture of what is being accomplished.

A two-way communication model. Ritter (23) developed a two-way communication model at the University of Oregon and applied the model in a selected school district to determine its effectiveness in developing positive opinions toward school district programs and practices. The questionnaire used to determine public opinion was administered three times to assess group opinions at various stages in the process. Two experimental procedures were used in the study. At the beginning of the experiment the questionnaire was administered to both groups. The questionnaire was administered a second time to one group just before feedback and to the other group just after feedback. The third administration of the questionnaire took place 6 weeks after the second administration and was used to determine the stability of any changes in opinions. The variation in the timing of the administration of the second questionnaire in relation to the providing of feedback information was designed to test the effects of feedback on opinions about the schools.

The results of the study show that there was stability of opinions for both groups between the first and second administration of the questionnaire. The group which responded to the questionnaire immediately after the feedback showed a large positive change in opinions about the schools. However, there was a slight decrease in favorableness for this group 6 weeks later. The responses for both groups on the final administration of the questionnaire were much more positive toward the schools than they were at the beginning of the experiment.

Change in opinion did not seem to be affected by such variables as sex, age, education, and whether or not the respondent had children attending public schools. There was more change toward favorableness on questions which were concerned with factual data as opposed to questions which involved values. This finding is consistent with a number of other studies which point up the difficulties in attempting to change values. The findings of this study indicate that a carefully designed communication model can be used effectively in bringing about favorable change of public opinions toward the schools.

School leaders and community leaders. A study was conducted in Flint, Mich., to determine whether lay citizens who occupied leadership positions in community school programs were personal influence leaders in the community served by the school (8). Individuals in the sample were classified into three groups: (1) school leaders who influenced other persons, (2) school leaders who did not influence others, and (3) nonleaders. Within each of the three groups data were gathered for each individual on such variables as attained education, occupation, job position, age, marital status, home ownership, religion, mass media exposure, neighborliness, and socioeconomic status.

The study found that individuals within each of the three groups had similar characteristics, while there were usually distinct differences between the groups. The differences that did occur within the groups were most often a reflection of differences in social class. School leaders who influenced others were also leaders in their neighborhoods and exerted an influence over rather long distances. In almost all cases, the strongest influence was with individuals of very similar social status. Personal influence leaders engaged in considerable and frequent interaction with other persons within their neighborhoods.

Superintendents and communication. Bernard Hughes conducted a study in Montana to determine superintendent's attitudes toward public communication tasks (10). The possibility of differences between superintendents in Montana and public school officials in other States should be kept clearly in mind when attempting to apply these findings to other areas. Hughes developed an instrument to assess superintendents' attitudes and awareness toward four important steps in the communication process. These steps were planning communications strategy and program; effective coding of useful messages; transmitting messages effectively; and obtaining, analyzing, and utilizing feedback.

The results of the study indicated that Montana school superintendents were generally unaware of their communication responsibilities and held negative attitudes toward such responsibilities. Both unawareness and negative attitudes increased as the size of the school system decreased. The older and more experienced superintendents in the sample were usually more aware of their communication responsibilities and were more favorable toward such responsibilities.

Seminar on mass communications. A 3-day seminar at Temple University in 1965 brought together a number of research specialists in communication, directors of school-community relations, school superintendents, and professors of educational administration. Two important purposes of the seminar were to review and bring together some of the outstanding research in mass communication and to point out the implication of this research for use in school-community relations programs. A number of interesting research findings presented at the seminar are discussed below:

The individual selection process

In looking at the contributions of sociology to mass communication, Mendelsohn discussed the impact of the selection process employed by individuals when they receive a communications message (20). What people do with mass communications depends upon ho they select what messages they will be exposed to and what they will retain. The selection process is affected by the social status of the individual (his actual and desired group identifications and his position in informal communcation networks). On many important issues, messages which come through the mass media alone serve primarily to reinforce attitudes already held. This selective process also has an effect upon the recall of information by an individual. White (25) referred to a study by Swanson which found that "the way in which each individual related ideas to his own needs and values had more effect upon recall than repetition of a theme by either the speaker or the media (24)." White also pointed out that the process is somewhat different in the case of news of important events. In this case, the initial knowledge comes directly from the mass media, and any conversations with opinion leaders simply reinforce previous knowledge (5).

Attitudes and new information

In reviewing psychological studies of communication, Katz (12) cited an opinion expressed by Krech and Crutchfield (15) that people accept new information and experience in such a way as to cause the least possible changes in the structure of the attitudes, beliefs, and values they already hold. Consequently, people are not likely to change very much in regard to areas about which they already have well developed ideas and information. Hyman and Sheatsley (11) found evidence that people seek information which is in harmony with the attitudes they already hold and that the same information is often interpreted in different ways. In fact, people tend to organize incoming information in relation to the purposes to which they will use the information rather than organizing it in such a way as to faithfully represent the facts as they were given (3).

Beliefs often accepted without evidence

McGuire tested the commonly held view that extreme beliefs in areas where there is almost universal agreement in society are difficult to change (19). He used four statements about health on which there was tremendous agreement (average of 13.26

on a 15-point scale). After reading a 1,000-word essay containing arguments against the statements, the agreement was cut in half (average of 6.64). McGuire explained his findings by stating that many common attitudes and beliefs are accepted without any real evidence or information to support them. These beliefs are abandoned when attacked because there are no arguments or information that can be used to defend the beliefs.

McGuire also found that presenting arguments both for and against certain beliefs strengthens resistance against later attempts to change opinions. This finding was supported in a study by Lumsdaine and Janis (16) which discovered that a two-sided argument was more effective when the audience was originally in agreement with the communicator's opinion and was later exposed to efforts to get them to change their opinions.

Sources of information and acceptance

The source of a message is an important factor in determining whether or not a message will be accepted immediately after it is transmitted, but the influence of the source seems to wear off over a period of time. Hovland and Wiess (9) used sources of information which had high and low credibility for transmitting the same message and found that opinions changed more when the high credibility source was used. However, when the opinions were again assessed 4 weeks later, both groups showed the same positive shift in opinions. The content of the message had had an impact; the prestige of the source did not. The implication of this finding is that the connection between the source of a message and its content is not the same when the message is first received as it is in memory. People tend to forget the source of information, but not the information itself. The rumor process is an example of this.

Hanson pointed out the importance of the board of education and the superintendent in an effective program of communicating with the public:

> *Since only the school board and the superintendent can really have an overall picture of the total operation and needs of a school system and must therefore ask for voter support based on limited information, it is essential that the voters be willing to accept the word of the board and the superintendent on many issues. For this reason, much greater effort should be made in most school systems to acquaint the public with board members and the superintendent in order to create a 'climate of faith'* (7).

After developing a definite policy for communicating with the public, a school board should then develop a strategy of communication. McClosky (17) outlines some principles of communication strategy as follows:

Take the initiative. The first message a person accepts about an event or issue has the most influence on his opinions. He will usually resist later attempts to change his opinions. The schools should tell their story first, before opponents have had a chance to influence the public to accept poorly founded opinions.

Be affirmative. Place emphasis on what can be accomplished and how it can be achieved rather than dwelling on problems and difficulties.

Initiate constructive frames of reference. Get the public to view the school message in a positive way. Depending upon the local situation, school officials might point out to the public that schools aim to help young people understand the ideals and traditions of American life, to teach the "fundamentals," and to give all pupils an opportunity to be successful. Good schools make our country strong and promote the general economic welfare of the people.

Make information accessible. Plan a communications program that will insure that people get the information they require in order to make decisions about the schools in relation to their needs and interests.

Be truthful. Consciously or subconsciously, people appraise the realiability of information sources. If people come to distrust a source of information, they will resent and reject further messages from that source.

Get the public to participate. Participation can create more understanding than simple communication alone. Participation provides more personalized conversations in which the participant can become exposed to more and better information about schools. Participation develops stronger commitment of emotions and values.

Involve community leaders. The general public is much more likely to respond favorably to messages coming from persons the public believes to be informed and trustworthy.

Reward participants. Recognition provides a psychological reward which encourages those already active to continue their efforts and others to become active.

Clarify the benefits, services, and needs of education. Try to maintain a balance between satisfaction with past progress and sufficient discontent to insure a desire for improvment. Any indication that past efforts have yielded no results tends to discourage further effort.

Avoid the use of threatening messages. Such messages tend to evoke negative and hostile reactions, Immediate results from threatening communication may seem satisfactory, but in the long run such communication may destroy the kind of public attitude which is necessary for continued support.

Prevent rumors by providing facts. This means that communication must be continuous. All available media should be used and important messages should be repeated.

Be friendly and show concern for citizens' interests. Education is not the only concern of citizens, and the schools are not the only local agencies concerned with education. Citizens appreciate friendly interest in their concerns, and local agencies are more likely to cooperate with the schools if the schools have acknowledged the educational value of such agencies to the public.

Appraise the communication process as well as sources of aid and opposition. Efforts to improve the communication process should be based on evaluations of the present program. A communication program can be more effective if aimed at specific segments of the public which may either support or oppose the schools. These are the groups which will influence the large percentage of persons who do not usually give school matters much attention.

Conclusions and Implications

The schools and the voters are far apart in terms of the understanding needed to provide adequate support for public education. In order to bridge this gap, communication must be improved. To do so, the reasons for the gap must be dealt with. The two main reasons for the gap are (1) the different values held by school people and voters and (2) the increasing size of school districts which does not allow much opportunity for voters to have a say in school policy. In many cases, the only time voters are given an opportunity to communicate their opinions to the schools is by voting "yes" or "no" in a school election.

Except for parents, schools have little immediate support. However, education is too important for the public to neglect it entirely. Therefore, schools should attempt to establish more communication with the public. This must be a two-way process so that voters will be able to communicate their opinions to the schools.

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Material in this kit was prepared under a contract with the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Office of Education position or policy.

PREP

No. 7-B

PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION

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Boards of education are expected by the general public and by subgroups within the public to perform certain roles related to the operation of the school system. In addition, the public holds certain expectations related to teachers, students, school finances, and various aspects of the school program. Since representing the public interest is considered to be an important function of the board of education, board members should be aware of what the public expects of them. Only a small number of research studies have been concerned with assessing what the public expects of boards of education. However, those studies offer valuable insights and recommendations for school board members.

Questions

The research reviewed in this paper was pursued in an effort to find answers to the following questions:

1. How much agreement is there among various subgroups of the public concerning what the role of the board of education should be?
2. What factors influence what is expected of the board of education?
3. What specific expectations does the public hold in regard to school board members, the school program, teachers, students, and school finance?
4. Does a relationship exist between expectations and financial support of the schools?

Review of Studies

The major portion of the research dealing with expectations of the board of education and the public schools has been conducted at the University of Wisconsin. A number of doctoral dissertations and other research reports have been developed based on data gathered in 12 Wisconsin school districts. These

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data were gathered through interviews with 1,794 citizens, 240 teachers, 183 elected public officials, 90 school board members, and 12 superintendents. Lipham (5) used information from these interviews to compare the expectations of lay citizens, public officials, school teachers, and school board members. Even though most citizens and many public officials had limited knowledge about how the board of education actually functioned, they held definite expectations about what the board of education and the schools should be doing. There were differences in how definite the expectations were within some of the groups. For example, parents of school-age children had more definite expectations of the board than did citizens with no children in school.

A number of factors were associated with expectations held for school board members. Among these factors were size and nature of the community, personal variables of the board members, religious affiliation, political party affiliation, and socioeconomic status. In regard to size and nature of the community, Lipham found that the expectations held for board members in small rural school districts were considerably different from those held for board members of urban school districts. The respondents in small rural districts tended to place greater restraints upon pupils, teachers, administrators, and board members.

The expectations held by citizens varied greatly from one task area to another. For example, many who held conservative expectations concerning board of education control over the private lives of teachers held liberal views concerning the extent to which pupils should be given freedom from control. This finding was supported in a study by Meggers (6) of the expectations held by parents. Meggers found no consistent liberal or conservative expectations among the various task areas involved in the school system operation. This study also found that expectations of the schools were strongly related to religious affiliation.

Two other studies which support Lipham's findings were conducted by Streich (7) and Carver (1). Streich found a strong relationship between political party affiliation and expectations for the school board role and considerable nonsystematic variations among the various task areas. Income and educational level were found by Carver to have a systematic and directional relationship with expectations of educational programs. Income relative to the local average was more closely related to expectations than the absolute level of income.

A surprising finding of Lipham's study was that board members attached less importance to their position as a board member than did citizens at large, teachers, or public officials. In fact, board members tended to avoid many of the responsibilities held for them by the other groups, delegating these responsibilities to the superintendent.

Fowlkes (2) offers three explanations as to why school board members may attach less esteem to their office than other persons do. (1) Board members recognize the complexity of their role better than outsiders do. (2) They recognize the extent to which they must rely upon professionals to advise and counsel them. (3) They recognize that the range of decisions over which they have control is much more limited than others may realize.

Larson (4) used the 90 board members involved in Lipham's study to examine the possible relationship between the values and beliefs of school board members and their satisfaction with their school board role. The results of this study showed no relationships between either values or the degree of open-mindedness and the board members' satisfaction with their school board role. Larson did note, however, that where board members held similar beliefs they experienced more satisfaction with their role. While board member satisfaction was not related to tenure, age, education, or income, board members who had comparatively high incomes were less close-minded than board members who had relatively low incomes.

In looking at specific expectations for the board of education, Lipham (5) found that respondents felt that the board of education should inform the public as to what items would be on the agenda of the next school board meeting. Respondents also agreed that board members should be elected at large rather than by sections of a district and that the board should be organized into subcommittees. All the groups involved in Lipham's study except the board members themselves felt that board members should be paid a salary, at least great enough to cover the expenses of attending meetings. There was also general agreement that school board members should not serve as spokesman for particular groups of persons. Among board members themselves, only 2 percent favored being a spokesman for a particular group while 90 percent opposed such a role. A majority of all groups favored the use of citizen's committees to advise the board of education, but this support was strongest among citizens at large and weakest among board members. When asked for particular problems on which they thought an advisory committee could be helpful, respondents listed school building programs, curriculum revision, pupil transportation and discipline, and public relations. Among those opposing the use of advisory committees, the most frequently given reasons for doing so were that solving educational problems was the board's responsibility and that involving too many people in school board decisions would result in confusion and delay.

In regard to specific aspects of the school program, there was a tendency for all groups to favor college preparatory courses in preference to vocational courses. Support was also evidenced for tax-supported extracurricular activities and summer school programs. There was strong support for academic freedom for budgeting money for experiments with new teaching methods and materials. In evaluating the school program, respondents rated guidance and counseling services lower than any other aspect of school program.

Most respondents felt that teachers should not be required to live within the school district, that smoking and drinking in public when not involved in school activities was all right, and that teachers should not be discouraged from participation in political organizations. There was also support for the granting of sabbatical leaves and offering 12-month employment for teachers.

All groups except board members tended to reject the practice of excusing students from school for family vacations. Opinions were about evenly divided on whether or not the board should allow married pupils to participate in extracurricular activities. In spite of court decisions to the contrary, there was almost unanimous agreement that schools should be allowed to decide the proper dress and grooming of pupils.

In regard to the financial decisions made by the board of education, Lipham found that, while the majority of all respondents considered the amount of money being spent on schools "about right," 32 percent of the citizens stated that they did not have enough information to make a judgment. All groups except board members favored seeking more Federal aid. (Only 19 percent of board members favored doing so.) Most citizens and public officials wanted school supplies to be bought locally "even if the cost is higher." However, there was also support for asking suppliers to submit bids.

In a companion study to Lipham's, Thorson (8) examined expectations for expenditures in relation to four measures of financial support and 10 budget items. (The four measures of financial support and the 10 budget items were not identified in the study.) This study found no relationship between expectations for the financial aspects of the school board role and the level of financial support for the public schools. The study also found no relationship between the level of expectations for selected expenditures and the amount of funds allocated for those expenditures. Surprisingly, the citizens who were most satisfied with the school program lived in school districts with the lowest per-pupil operating levy and those who were least satisfied lived in districts having the highest per-pupil levy. Based on the data from this study, there does not seem to be such a thing as "all out" support for the schools, but rather citizens seem to discriminate between what aspects of the school program they will support. Even then, a person may hold preferences for particular school programs but may not be willing to pay for them. Thorson concluded that the fact that many board members had little understanding of what other people expected of them was not always such a handicap, since many financial decisions were not effectively within the control of the local school board, and thus were not really controlled by what the local citizens expected of the board.

LaPlant (3) used the data from Lipham's Wisconsin survey along with information gathered from the superintendents of 12 school districts to study the relationship between innovation and expectations of the school board role. The greatest consensus was on matters of building procedures, school sites, and building construction. There was less agreement about the role of school board members among public officials. In explaining his findings, LaPlant stated that, in school districts where there is considerable disagreement between teachers and citizens concerning the role of the school board, the board may be so concerned about possible conflict that as a body it cannot focus on its role. Thus fewer innovations are adopted and those are adopted at a later time. On the other hand, when there is agreement between teachers and citizens, the board may focus on its role and in the process adopt more innovations at earlier times.

Conclusions and Implications

Studies reviewed in this report have several important implications for school board members. While there seem to be differences of opinion regarding the role of the board of education among the various groups used in these studies, the major differences are not among groups but rather in relation to task areas. There doesn't appear to be a consistent attitude on the part of citizens toward all areas of the school program. Citizens may hold conservative expectations for one area of the school operation and at the same time hold liberal expectations for another area. For this reason, boards of education cannot generalize about public expectations for the school program based on an assessment of citizens' attitudes toward only one area of the program. Therefore, if boards of education are really concerned about expectations which citizens hold for the school board and for school operation, they must make efforts to assess expectations for all areas of operation. Assessing the expectations of citizens for their schools does not mean that the board of education expects to give the citizens exactly what they say they want. There may be good reasons why the programs should differ from what the citizens expect from the schools. If this is true, then efforts should be made to explain to the public why the board of education is pursuing a course which is different from what is expected.

But this cannot be accomplished until the board has some knowledge of public expectations. The literature on school surveys and school public relations provides references to a number of instruments to assess what the public expects of their schools. However, it may be advisable in some situations to have the local staff develop an instrument to assess the expectations held for the particular areas of the school's operation that are of concern to the local board of education. Once the assessment of the public's expectations has been made, the board of education has the option of either changing its operation to meet the expectations of the public or taking steps to change what the public expects of the board.

The school board member is in a position which allows for considerable amount of conflict in how he is to carry out his duties. While on one hand he is the public's representative and has some obligation to respond according to what the public expects of the schools, at the same time he feels an obligation to provide the best possible education for the children of the school district. He may perceive that what certain groups of citizens expect of the schools is in conflict with what he believes is best for the school system. The board member may rest assured that he will feel pressures from various groups within the community attempting to sway him to their point of view. If he is to deal effectively with these pressures then he should be aware of certain factors which affect the expectations held by individuals in the school district. As research has pointed out, these expectations may differ according to the size and kind of community in which the school district is located. Expectations may also differ because of religious beliefs, political affiliations, and differences in social and economic status.

Research indicates that the public expects the board of education to keep it informed not only of what the board is doing but of what is happening in the schools. The public feels that board members should represent the school district as a whole rather than particular segments within the school district or particular groups of people. Citizens believe that they can help the board of education by serving as advisers when the board is dealing with certain problems related to school buildings, curriculum revisions, and matters pertaining to pupils.

The public seems to be more concerned about matters related to the school curriculum than most boards of education realize. In many cases, the public is much more in favor of innovations and experimentation in the school program than is the board of education. What the public expects of the board of education in regard to controlling the behavior of teachers varies considerably from one community to another. In rural areas and small communities there is a more conservative attitude toward the behavior of teachers than in larger, more urbanized areas. Generally speaking, however, citizens in most communities exhibit attitudes toward teacher behavior which are more liberal than that which is evidenced by the operation of most boards of education. There is also considerable variation in the attitude of the public in regard to the behavior of students. In some cases, parents may oppose what they consider to be too much control on the part of the board of education because they feel such control infringes upon their responsibilities as parents. Nevertheless, there seems to be considerable agreement that schools should have authority to make decisions regarding student appearance. A number of conflicts may arise in the near future regarding student appearance because of the speed with which student styles and grooming behavior seem to be changing. In most communities, the regulations of the board of education concerning dress and appearance are not flexible enough to deal with these sudden changes. This is especially true of regulations that are so specific as to specify the length of a girl's skirt or the length of a boy's hair. Conflict in this area might be reduced by allowing students more authority in establishing the regulations of dress and appearance.

In regard to school finance, school boards should realize that there is considerable discrimination on the part of citizens about what aspects of the school program they will support. Even when a person prefers a particular type of program, he may not be willing to pay for it. In fact, there seems to be considerable rationalization on the part of citizens in regard to the financial support of the school system. By convincing themselves that their school program is adequate and that they are satisfied with it, citizens in low support districts feel no obligation to increase the financial support to education. For this reason, school boards must find adequate means to keep the public informed of the financial conditions of the schools.

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PREP

No. 7-C

PUBLIC OPINION OF THE SCHOOLS

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Boards of education are concerned about what the public thinks of the local school system and of education in general. School-community relations programs are often evaluated on the basis of public opinion. The probability of success in elections involving school finances may depend greatly on current public opinion of the schools. Studies which have been concerned with some aspects of public opinion of education and schools have indicated that opinions and attitudes are related to such factors as individual characteristics, value orientations, community characteristics, and the opinions of community leaders.

Questions

Research on public opinion of the schools has attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What aspects of the school system are of greatest concern to the public?

2. What individual characteristics affect the educational attitudes of the public?

3. What community factors are related to educational attitudes?

Review of Studies

A study which examined the educational attitudes of 40,000 persons in 36 States found that the public's main concern was for the quality of the professional educator, especially the teacher (11). The next most important concerns were for the individual student and his success in school, a broad academic program, a variety of instructional activities, and physical facilities. While some differences in responses based on social and economic conditions were noted, there were many more similarities than differences.

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Shelly (12) found differences in attitudes toward education based on the enrollment of the school district, payment or nonpayment of property taxes, age, sex, length of residence in the school district, whether or not there were children in the home and children in school, educational level, and the total family income. Profiles of a typical school supporter and a typical nonsupporter were developed. The typical supporter was a woman, had no children, paid no property tax, lived in a large school district, and was a college graduate. The typical nonsupporter was a man, lived in a small school district for over 20 years, was between 45 and 60 years old, had an income of less than $5,000 per year, and an education of eighth grade or less.

A California study (10) examined the relationship between social rank and communication about schools, participation in school matters, and approval of school programs. The findings revealed that persons of higher social rank possessed more and better knowledge of school affairs, expressed more opinions about schools, and were more likely to approve increasing the financial support of the schools. Approval of the school program was more likely to come from persons of the lower social levels. Social rank was not related to how often citizens thought about school matters, and communication from citizens to school officials was low among all social levels.

A study of attitudes toward innovations in the school curriculum among Negro and white citizens in Portland, Oregon, found that citizens of both races tended to value tradition and the concept of "hard work" in relation to the school programs (1). Most of the opposition to innovations among white citizens came from those who were under 25 or over 55 years old and had no schoolage children. The lack of social mobility and chances for economic advancement were related to negative attitudes among Negroes. White citizens were more likely to communicate with school officials.

A recent West Virginia study compared the attitudes of the poor (yearly income of $3,000 or less for a family of four) and nonpoor and found no differences in educational values (2). However, the poor consistently evaluated the local school system's operation and resources more favorably than the nonpoor. This tendency for the poor to overrate the local school conditions resulted in their voting down efforts to secure greater local financial support.

Attitudes toward education are influenced by the degree of urbanization in the community. Otis (10) found that persons living in areas of lower urbanization possessed more knowledge of school affairs, exhibited greater approval of school programs, and were more likely to approve increased financial support for schools than persons living in the areas of high urbanization. A Missouri study (9) found that rural people expected and approved a more rigidly disciplined school than did urban people. Carter pointed out that educational attitudes in many urban areas have been influenced by rural migration to the cities (2).

In a study of rural neighborhoods, Maughan (7) found that neighborhoods of people having a variety of ethnic and religious characteristics were more favorable to school programs and practices than were neighborhoods where the characteristics of the people were more alike. However, an Indiana study (6) found high similarity between the educational attitudes of adults in a declining community. (The findings of this study are greatly limited since only one community of each type was involved.)

A study of community leaders in Maryland (8) found much sympathetic interest in public schools and considerable agreement on educational uses. Generally, these leaders placed heavy emphasis on intellectual training as opposed to the social, ethical, or practical aims of education. There was also support for raising the status of teachers (including the paying of higher salaries), smaller class sizes, and more individual attention and better counseling for students. Updating vocational training, improving school communications, and providing more State aid for education were also supported by the community leaders.

Conclusions and Implications

While there is considerable public opinion supporting education and local schools, such support is more likely to be found among persons and communities having certain characteristics (5). Parents of schoolage children are usually more favorable (1, 3, 4), as are persons who are better educated, have higher incomes, and are of the upper social classes (1, 2, 10, 12). The degree of urbanization and the structure of local communities have an influence on opinions about the schools. The less urban and more varied communities are usually more supportive of education (2, 7, 10).

School boards can perform their function of representing the public in school matters much more effectively if they have information about the concerns and opinions of the public. Therefore, local school authorities should make efforts to determine what the public thinks of the operation of the local schools. Surveys of local citizens and interaction with community leaders may provide valuable insight into the impact the schools are making on the community.

Evaluations of the schools should be considered in relation to the structure of the community and the characteristics of persons expressing opinions about the schools. Knowing where support and opposition are most likely to be found can aid school authorities in planning public relations programs designed to increase support and reduce opposition. Since support is already strong among parents of school children and persons whose education, income, and social positions are above average, most public relations activities should aim at gaining support among the lower socioeconomic groups and persons who have little contact with the schools.

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PREP

No. 7-D

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION: ELECTIONS INVOLVING SCHOOL ISSUES

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Bond issues and school tax proposals are usually submitted to an electorate for approval. The effects of such elections on community support for education make them a matter of great importance for school board members and others who are entrusted with administration of the public schools.

Questions

1. How can voter support be increased for bond issues or tax proposals?
2. How does voter turnout affect the results of elections over bond issues and tax proposals?
3. How does the size of bond issues and tax proposals affect election results?
4. How are characteristics of the voter population such as income, education, and attitudes related to the results of elections involving school issues?

Review of Studies

Voting patterns. A number of studies have analyzed voting patterns in school bond and tax elections. Among the factors considered in these studies were voter turnout, size of the bond issue or tax levy in dollars, population characteristics, equity of tax burden, and district wealth. Some of the findings related to these factors are summarized below.

1. Voter turnout is defined as the proportion of eligible voters who vote in a given election. Carter (1), in a study which included districts from all parts of the United States, found that for districts of all sizes there was greater voter turnout where issues were defeated. The latter finding conflicted with conclusions from research in Iowa (7) in which it was found that the size of the issue was not related to percentage of favorable votes. In a study of Mississippi school districts (2) it was found that low voter turnout was associated with a favorable

vote, while Willis (13) reported that in elections in Akron, Ohio, increases in voter turnout from one election to another were associated with increases in the proportion of favorable votes. Considering only those districts which had voted favorably on school issues, Willis found that voter turnout ranged from very low to very high.

In a study of elections for school board vacancies in Cook County, Illinois, Minar (12) compared voter turnout to the level of dissent registered. Dissent was defined as the total of votes for losing candidates as a proportion of the total vote in the election. He concluded that districts with a high level of voter turnout were more likely to have an unfavorable vote on financial issues.

There is obviously no simple relationship between voter turnout and decisions on school issues. This kind of decision-making appears to be a complex process (7) requiring attention to a number of other factors.

2. Several researchers have studied population characteristics as they relate to voting behavior. Population size appears to have no relationship to outcomes in school elections (7). On the other hand, changes in the general makeup of the population do seem to have significance for voting patterns (6). Crider (2) found that an increase in the number of persons in the population between the ages of 21 and 45 was associated with success of school elections. Increases in the proportion of college-educated adults were reported by Hickrod (8) to be related to increased support for education in general. (Hickrod did not analyze election outcomes specifically.)

The social status of voters as determined by occupation, income, and education has a relationship to proportion of favorable votes in school elections. This conclusion was reached in a study of school elections in Los Angeles (9). When the population was divided into four groups--low, low-middle, high-middle, and high--it was found that the highest level of support for school elections came from the areas classified as low, and the lowest level of support from areas classified as low-middle. Similar findings emerged in a study in Akron, Ohio (13), where districts with large nonpublic school enrollments, low educational level of the population, and large numbers of blue collar workers in general showed low levels of support for school elections.

3. An interesting finding from a study of voter behavior in school elections in Ohio was reported by Marlowe (10). He found that among individual voters there was a greater probability of a favorable vote on school issues among those whose property tax burden was equitable in relation to their income. Income and property tax payment were each divided into five ranked categories. "Yes" voters on school proposals were found more often to be renters or property owners whose tax payment was in a lower category than their income. Conversely, "no" voters were more likely to have incomes in a category below their tax category. This finding may lead to a better understanding of voter behavior in school elections.

4. In general, it is to be expected that school districts in which per-pupil wealth (as measured by tax assessments) is higher will show a higher level of support for education. This should be reflected by a higher proportion of favorable votes on school financial proposals. However, this expectation was not

supported by findings from a study of elections in Iowa (7) which found that, as evaluation increased, the percentage of favorable votes on financial issues decreased. On the other hand, in Iowa districts which had a 2.5 mill school levy there was greater likelihood of support for financial proposals. From these findings it appears that a previous history of support for education is the best indicator of future support and that ability to support education is not an indicator that support will be forthcoming.

Election campaign strategies. In view of conflicting findings about the effects of voter turnout on election outcomes, boards of education and superintendents are likely to be uncertain about what strategies to employ in conducting school elections. They may take the attitude that organized campaigns which increase voter turnout also increase the likelihood that the issue will be defeated, or they may feel that regardless of outcome the voters are entitled to full information about a proposed course of action. Evidence from research suggests that most of the techniques ordinarily employed in school elections have relatively little effect either way on the outcome. In the Iowa study (7), for example, of seven communications techniques studied, only one appeared to affect outcome. The techniques were brochures, posters, advertisements by merchants, sample ballots and voting information, sound trucks, mailings, and letters to editors. Letters to editors were related to unfavorable vote. Two other techniques appeared to be helpful. They were open public meetings and general "talking up" of the issue. Speakers at civic clubs, student presentations, clergy support, house-to-house canvasses, and telephone committees were not related to election results. Supplying baby sitters for voters had no effect on the election, but providing cars to transport voters to the polls resulted in unfavorable outcomes.

Support of board members and other authorities was related to favorable outcomes in school elections in Mississippi (2). Other factors identified in that study as related to election results were month in which the election was held (September and October were the most favorable and April and December the most unfavorable months), soliciting support from the Negro community, and preplanning by educational authorities.

Several research studies have examined the role of community influentials in relation to support for education. Influentials are persons identified by residents of a community as having much influence on decisions made on public issues. Masse (11) concluded that, in communities where influentials were involved with and supported the schools, there was a higher level of support for education. However, his research did not show that involvement and support were necessarily the cause of greater financial effort in those communities.

Diffie (5) assessed the civic attitudes and educational beliefs of three groups of persons in school districts in Illinois. He found that registered voters and persons identified as influential leaders in low effort districts held more liberal attitudes than comparable groups in high effort districts. Teachers in districts displaying a low level of support for education were conservative in both areas, and teachers from districts with high support levels were liberal. The reasons for the disparity between attitudes held by teachers and the other two groups were not explained.

Conclusions and Implications

There are few suggestions which can be offered to school board members as a result of the research summarized in this area. The strongest relationship between community characteristics and support for education involves factors over which board members have no control. These factors include, as examples, the social status of people in a community, kind and extent of change in population makeup, and a previous history of support for education. Other factors, over which boards of education might be expected to exert some influence, appear to be unrelated to level of educational support.

Two conclusions which can be drawn from the research are: (1) In general, informing the public about proposed bond issues or tax proposals by means of open meetings is likely to increase voter support for the proposal, and (2) preplanning by school administrators and presenting needs to the public well in advance of the election date appears to have positive results. It should be noted that these generalizations are based on relatively few studies; further research may find that they cannot be supported. One additional conclusion coming out of research by Marlowe (10) is that boards of education should consider the equity of existing tax arrangements when submitting new issues to public vote.

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PREP

No. 7-E

JOINT ENDEAVORS OF THE COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL

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School boards are constantly confronted with the need to make policy decisions on the nonschool use of public school property, utilization of community resources, and duties of advisory committees. Answers to the following questions were sought in the current research literature.

Questions

1. What are some school board policies that influence community use of public school property?
2. Should there be written policies to govern lay participation in curriculum programs and the use of community resources for instructional purposes?
3. How can special interest groups improve school-community relations?
4. To what extent are positive changes in attitudes toward public schools noted in those who participate in local adult education programs?
5. Are lay advisory committees functional in improving the school curriculum?

Review of Studies

Use of school facilities by community groups. An analysis of the board policies and administrative practices which influence community use of public school property in over 450 Missouri school districts was conducted by Holland at the University of Missouri (1). Although this study was particularly concerned with school districts in Missouri, some of the findings reported relate to school systems in general.

The school administrator in nearly all of the districts studied had board policies concerning nonschool use of school property. Nearly three-fourths

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of the districts reported that these policies were in writing. Over half of these policies had been revised recently, a specific indication of the flexibility of school policies.

The superintendent and the board of education participated in the formulation of policy pertaining to the use of school property in approximately 90 percent of the reporting districts; however, slightly less than 20 percent of the school districts reported that teachers, students, and other laymen participated in policymaking with the board and the superintendent.

A large percentage of the school districts indicated that property was available for nonschool use 12 months of the year. Although nonschool use of school property has increased recently, nearly 90 percent of the districts had at one time refused certain groups or organizations permission to use school property for nonschool activities.

Over half of the districts required application for nonschool use of school property to be submitted from 1 to 7 days prior to actual use. A majority of the districts gave the school superintendent the authority to pass on each application. Most of the schools required all groups to supervise the school property while in use. Extremely high fees were charged to commercial groups to discourage their use of school facilities.

Utilization of large rural and suburban secondary school facilities by school and community groups was investigated by Turner (7). Responses from 29 principals and 524 teachers in North Carolina provided data for this study, which sought to determine the outdoor educational and recreational uses being made of large rural and suburban secondary school sites. One important finding was that community groups used the school facilities relatively little.

A study by Lowe (2) of 15 selected school districts in Missouri concentrated on the use of specific community resources for instructional purposes. The study found that few board of education and school administrative policies on the use of community resources were in written form. Other findings were: board of education and administrative policies regulated the length of field trips and required parental permission and a specific number of chaperones for participating students; there were board policies providing district-owned buses for field trips that were associated with teacher-supervised field trips; and school policies regulated the distribution of literature to pupils by outside resource persons such as clergymen, industries, and certain pressure groups. In districts where board policies existed regarding visitors, materials, and equipment, the teachers made greater use of these outside sources.

Turner (7) found that, if the school districts use lay advisory committees in local improvement programs, they gain considerable support. But to continue this practice boards of education are advised to develop a statement of policies and procedures for lay advisory committees.

Use of special interest groups. Special interest groups (PTA, alumni associations, and others) have contributed to the improvement of communications between the school and the community. They perform a large number of activities such as sponsoring dinner-dances, giving recognition to athletes at special assemblies, and donating scholarships to students and gifts to the school.

According to Wartenberg (8), alumni associations of public senior high schools in New Jersey rarely sponsor activities that help the school's total curriculum. For the most part, communications are informal between the school and the association, and only on a few occasions do school and association work together on a joint activity. The study also pointed out that presidents and principals agreed that alumni associations were worthwhile and would like for them to undertake more activities.

Those in adult education programs may be viewed as a a special interest group since they utilize the facilities and resources of the school. In a study by Murtaugh (3), the relation between participation in adult education programs and formulation or change of attitudes of participants was investigated. The population studied was the 7,235 adults enrolled in the 1,123 classes in the Flint, Mich., adult education program during the winter term of 1967. Participation in adult education seemed to have only a slight impact on improvement of attitudes toward the school.

Another special interest group, the lay advisory committee, was investigated by Werle (9) to determine how to improve the school curriculum through use of such a committee. Werle found in a study of 85 school districts having lay advisory groups that there is considerable support for the use of lay committees. However, laymen and professionals differed on how they should be used for curricular development. Professionals placed the greatest emphasis on a need for clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, whereas laymen expressed more concern for sound curriculum consideration.

A study concerning community participation in decisions by the school board was conducted by Smoley (5). All issues considered by the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore, Md., during the period 1953-59 were examined. Special groups of citizens were categorized for analysis. One group, elected government officials, was found to provide false initiation of issues under pressure of constituents. A second group, nongovernment organizations that excluded professional teacher organizations, acted as a civic organization for schools. Finally, the group categorized as nonschool, nongovernment served as a constant check on school board activities, objecting and complaining when it thought an injustice had been done. The nonschool, nongovernment group forced the school board to reevaluate action taken.

Conclusions and Implications

Policy pertaining to facilities. There are several board policies that directly influence the community use of public school property as reported in literature reviewed for this report (1). Implications are that boards of education should involve teachers, students, and patrons in the formulation of policies concerning nonschool use of school property; and that revision of policies should occur frequently to meet the changing needs of the community.

Because increased use is being made of school property by community groups the literature reviewed indicated that school districts should have current, well-formulated, written policies concerning community use of school property;

also those persons directly affected by these policies should have a voice in their formulation. In general, those policies concerning community use of school property should be made known to the public, and policies should be written to emphasize positive public relations by encouraging community use of school property.

Extent of school property used. According to a report of the Joint Planning Committee for More Effective Schools (4), the school plant should be put to maximum use--for a full schoolday, on weekends, and during the summer months. Furthermore, schools should be so located as to achieve maximum integration. Suggestions for community involvement include parent associations, workshops, and community organizations.

Use of community resources. Few board of education and school administrative policies were found in written form concerning the use of community resources. Findings (2) revealed that the degree to which community resources are used by teachers are influenced by administrators. School officials tend to provide indirect encouragement in the use of community resources rather than encouragement through specific policies or procedures.

It has been recommended that professional and inservice training programs should emphasize the development of skills in the instructional use of community resources.

More personnel, possibly on a part-time basis, are needed for supervisory, maintenance, and janitorial services, especially in connection with the community use of school facilities.

Schools should work more closely with alumni associations. They should encourage staff members to join and participate in alumni activities, appointing a staff member to act as an official representative to the association. They should encourage alumni to serve as resource speakers, library aides, and assist the school in areas where help is needed (8). The alumni association appears to improve relations between the school and the community.

A study by Murtaugh (3) examined the extent that adult education programs changed attitude toward the public schools. That is, was there an improved relationship between school and community because of the adult education programs? It has been found that the public relations value of adult education programs has been overstated and that they have a limited impact in the public relations area.

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PREP

No. 7-F

APPROACHES TO SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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The most common measure for effectiveness of school-community relations is the successful outcome of elections involving financial support of the schools. These elections may involve passage of school bond issues, increasing tax levies for school support, or approving school budgets. School-community relations should be and in many cases are concerned with other situations, but the success of elections concerning financial support of the schools seems to be the ultimate goal of most public relations efforts and is usually the most important concern of school boards.

Questions

1. What approaches can be taken to further school-community relations?

2. What approach does research recommend?

Review of Study

In one of the most comprehensive studies of the structure and process of school-community relations, Richard F. Carter and his associates examined the possible relationships of 860 variables with four criteria of school-community relations (3). These four criteria were school support, participation, understanding, and lack of conflict. School support was referred to as the degree to which voters in school districts reviewed financial issues favorably. A measure to support was taken as the percentage of voters who voted "yes" on an issue. Participation was defined as the degree to which voters exercised their right to vote in school elections and was measured as eligible voters who turned out to vote in school elections of all kinds. Understanding was defined as the degree to which informed observers in a school district perceived factors affecting the school-community relationship the same way and was measured

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by the agreement among observers on a number of factors affecting the situation. Observers used in the study included the superintendent, board members, teacher representatives, parent representatives, mass media representatives, and interested citizens. Lack of conflict was referred to as the degree to which controversy and conflict were lacking in a school district and was measured as the degree to which factors which might cause controversy and conflict were perceived by observers as being inoperative in a school district.

Using a technique capable of establishing the relationships of several hundred variables to the structure of school-community relations, the researchers identified and examined the 40 most important variables to show the basis for patterns of school support. They found that understanding, participation, and lack of conflict each had a definite relationship to support, but were not related to one another. From these findings, three patterns of support and one pattern of nonsupport were inferred:

- Support can be achieved through lack of conflict by attempting to meet the demand for educational services in ways which minimize the development of conflict.
- Support can be achieved through lower participation based on the use of effective control mechanisms which avoid arousing the interest of opposition groups and the stability of district characteristics such as pupil population and the age distribution of the community.
- Support can be achieved through understanding based on open two-way communication channels between the schools and the public, effective use of communication techniques and media, and content of communication which is relevant to the concerns of the public.
- Nonsupport usually results from the presence of conditions which are associated with conflict and lack of understanding.

Conclusions and Implications

Achieving support through lack of conflict involves a great deal of luck. School authorities can do little to keep conflict from arising; they can only attempt to control it when it does arise. In the final analysis, lack of conflict is much more dependent upon the characteristics of the school district than it is upon actions taken by school leaders. Attempting to gain support through lack of participation runs counter to a basic tenet of our democratic way of life--that is, that the individual citizen should take an active part and express his opinions in affairs of government. It would be undemocratic for school officials to attempt to manipulate conditions for the express purpose of bringing about lower participation. However, there are certain factors related to bringing about better understanding of the schools which are also related to lower participation. Setting up procedures for transmitting information to teachers and parents is related both to understanding and to lower participation. In this case, those groups which are already most supportive of the school system are given the information while the rest of the public, where opposition is most likely to arise, does not have its attention focused on the schools at all.

Attempting to bring about support of the schools through better understanding would involve not only communicating with teachers and parents but also with the rest of the public. While this might tend to increase the kind of participation which is associated with less support, it would also help to develop conditions which are associated with better control of conflict. Understanding will not always lead to support, "but it should invariably lead to lack of conflict." Therefore, it is recommended that efforts to achieve support concentrate on developing better understanding through improved and expanded communication between the schools and the community, including the developing of more formalized means of two-way communication with the public (3).

In his study on informal communication, Carter recommends that, instead of having a general information program aimed at the public as a whole, specific informational programs should be instituted which are aimed at specific groups of people (2). Carter also indicated that, if these groups are to be successfully influenced to support the schools, the information they receive should be relevant to their needs and interests. The content of many informal communications about the schools is not relevant to these needs and interests. Therefore, Carter recommends that schools take steps to increase both the number and the quality of formal discussions of school matters.

In another study he outlines a set of procedures which would provide for a more formalized discussion of school affairs (3). An example of using this set of procedures for introducing an innovation into the school system would include: (1) announcing the possibility of a change and asking for opinions from the public about the proposed change, (2) reporting the opinions expressed about the change and the decision reached, along with information concerning the time for reviewing the results of the change, (3) announcing the time and place of the discussion that will evaluate the results of the change, and encouraging citizens to attend and express their opinions, and (4) reporting on the evaluation discussion and the decision reached as well as the time and place for any subsequent reviews of the change.

In this same study, Carter makes the following recommendations to school authorities in dealing with the public:

- *Issue regular reports to citizens.* These reports may not change the attitudes of any citizens toward the schools; but if regular reports are not received by those who have favorable attitudes toward the schools, their attitudes may become less favorable. This process serves to reassure citizens about their schools.

- *Arrange contacts with neglected groups.* A special program might be designed for communicating to preschool parents who are sometimes concerned about the quality of the school program. Communication efforts aimed at post-school parents might help increase their interest in school matters and relieve to some extent the conservative nature of their vote. Adult organizations and the mass media could be used to communicate with nonparents.

- *Improve contacts with specific groups.* Many times communication techniques are used too broadly or are aimed at inappropriate audiences. Since different groups of citizens have different interests and concerns, communication programs should be planned for these groups in relation to their interests.

- *Establish contact with latent supporters.* Many citizens have no contact with the schools. If contact is to be made, it must be done so by the schools since these citizens do not believe they are capable of establishing such contact.

- *Make greater use of the mass media.* For many citizens the mass media is the primary source for information about schools. To overcome various problems that may arise through the use of the mass media, schools could attempt to accommodate the particular needs of these media. Schools might also secure better cooperation by rewarding the media for their help through public recognition.

- *Teach about schools in school.* Most citizens are poorly prepared to take an interest in school affairs. By learning something about how the school system functions students will be better prepared to take an active part in school affairs when they become adults.

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PREP

No. 7-G

MASS MEDIA IN SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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What does research say about the use of mass media in school-community relations? Communicating the complete school story to the general public requires the application of specialized knowledge and technical skill in the use of audiovisual mass media. This paper reports some major findings about how radio, motion pictures, television, and newspapers affect communications between the school and community.

Questions

1. What communication strengths should be outstanding in those school representatives assigned to disseminate school information?
2. How does school information best acquire its goal of objectively communiating with the public?
3. In what way can the mass media add to the effectiveness of planning and organizing the school-community relations program?

Review of Studies

Less than 2 percent of the local newspaper, on the average, is devoted to school news (3). Of this small amount of coverage, school sports events receive about 52 percent. Usually those things pertaining to the schools that readers are interested in are never printed. Much less than 2 percent of the time is devoted to the public schools in commercial radio, television, and movies.

Research shows that the effectiveness of the communication can depend largely on the image that the communicator portrays to the audience. Generally, audiences have responded comparatively well to specific communicators because they considered them of high prestige, expert, trustworthy, or highly reliable. On the other hand, it was found that the makeup of the audience can result in the acceptance or rejection of a specific communication. Studies show that the communicator can add to the effectiveness of a message through the discriminatory

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use of words, sentences, certain stylish devices, and formulas; and that certain line lengths, type faces, headings, spatial arrangements, and grades of paper can add to the effectiveness of a message (5).

Research dealing with communication through radio, motion picture, and television has been conducted by Winfield (6). He found that the content of radio programs was divided approximately into three major categories: entertainment, news, and other (commercials, public service, religion, sports, and special events). About 67 percent of the time was devoted to entertainment (music), 10 percent to news, and 13 percent to the category designated "other." The total number of hours devoted to radio listening per home per week is 24.

Today's motion picture audience is made up of persons in their teens and twenties, and single men who consider movie-going as a social activity. Relatively little commercial movie time is devoted specifically to the field of education. Approximately 54 million people spend about 4 hours per week in the movies. According to Winfield, the general trends and short-term cycles in the type of motion picture produced in Hollywood are related to cultural, economic, and historical events in the United States and also in the world.

Commercial television has cut deeply into movie-going and radio audiences. However, television today is firmly established as a part of the American way of life. Television is present in four out of five homes, and the reception range is within nearly all of the American public. Winfield found that 86 million Americans over the age of 12 spend slightly more than 5 hours per day watching television. This audience can expect entertainment programs 74 percent of the daytime hours and 84 percent of the evening hours.

The low percentage of commercial television time devoted to improvement of education should be reversed. One of the most profitable methods for reversal of today's trend is to develop a sound theory for communications between educational leaders and administration of the television industry. Ackourey (1) has pioneered this movement by formulating a theory of pattern of communication between educational administration and commercial television representatives. Specifically, her theory deals with the mutual objectives of schools and television stations and communication patterns between their agents. One important conclusion from this study was that the educational administrator who plans the objectives of the school program with interested and informed citizens, and not solely with television representatives, provides the foundation for sound communication patterns. Ackourey also concludes that the intentions, expertness, and trustworthiness of educational administrators and television representatives can influence the reactions of the receiver of a communication.

Although television and radio claim a larger audience, there is presently more research in the area of newspaper interests and coverage of educational events. According to Gordon (3) the interests of readers of school news are very similar irrespective of age, sex, occupation, and geographic location. Parents of school children are most interested in school news dealing with pupil health, curriculum, and business management and finance.

The purpose of a study by Hogan (4) was to seek insight into the press image of public schools. She concentrated on the Chicago Public Schools and sought to determine and describe the volume and kinds of news and opinion material about the city's schools. Some of the findings and conclusions from the study were:

(1) Coverage on the school was related to the circulation for the newspaper investigated, (2) the subject categories receiving the greatest emphasis were personnel, organization and administration, and school physical plant, (3) the board of education was the chief source for information appearing in the newspaper about the schools, and (4) every newspaper in the study was instrumental in bringing educational issues to the attention of the public.

Another related study concerning the newspaper was conducted by Frum (2), who sought to determine the nature and extent of misunderstanding between newspaper editors and school representatives. One major conclusion from the analysis was that editors are more satisfied with the editor-superintendent relationship than the superintendents. Also the superintendents are more critical of the editor's looking for and playing up sensational angles of school news and of the headings given to school news stories than any other phase of reporting school news. Editors are more critical of the superintendent's ability to write news releases than any other phase of reporting school news. Both parties agree that the editor should consult the superintendent about the facts contained in editorials about education.

Conclusions and Implications

There are numerous implications for schools from research dealing with mass media for communication. One specific suggestion is that school personnel should be encouraged to maintain a positive image (5). The chief school administrator, when selecting a staff member to communicate with the public, should base the selection on the person's communicating strengths. Such a person should understand the audience and slant the message toward this audience.

Printed materials released by schools should be directed toward improving attitudes of the community on given issues. If schools are aware of the opinion leaders in the community, specific messages should be directed toward these leaders, and their opinion should be solicited.

According to Pinnie (5) the school message should be short, written in plain language with comprehensive sentences.

The use of school-made radio and television programs as well as school-produced motion pictures should be considered in planning and organizing a school-community relations program. Winfleid (6) has suggested that school-produced programs may be designed with "target-audience appeal." It appears that the program structure can be designed to attract and hold an audience which will be responsive. This newer trend is in contrast to the old style of "something for everyone."

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PREP

No. 7-H

EVALUATION OF SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS

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If public relations programs are to be effective, they must be periodically evaluated to determine if they are meeting their goals and to indicate areas where improvements need to be made. Numerous studies have been conducted to evaluate school public relations programs. Some have been concerned with the public relations programs of a single school district while others have involved a number of school districts within a given State or across the Nation. The public relations programs of both elementary and secondary schools have been evaluated and the attitudes of school authorities toward public relations activities have been assessed. This paper examines a number of these studies as to the standards employed in the evaluations, the findings of the investigations, and the recommendations for improving school public relations programs.

Questions

1. Who has the responsibility for school public relations?
2. How are public relations programs organized?
3. How does the size of a school system affect public relations?
4. What is the scope of public relations programs?
5. What instruments are available for evaluating public relations programs?

Review of Studies

A case study of the public relations program of the South Huntington Schools in New York indicated that the most serious problems faced by the school district were providing school buildings for the increasing pupil population and securing the financial support of the taxpayers (8). A review of the literature and correspondence with authorities in the field of public relations were undertaken to establish standards against which to measure the public relations programs of

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Huntington. The process produced a list of six general standards for public relations programs: A school public relations program should be (1) honest in intent and execution, (2) an intrinsic part of the total school program, (3) continuous, (4) comprehensive, (5) sensitive to its public, and (6) simple in the ideas it attempts to convey.

Based on interviews with school authorities, teachers, nonteaching personnel, and representatives of various segments of the community, several recommendations were made for the improvement of the public relations program. The study recommended that the board of education adopt a statement of basic policy for school public relations and establish a position of coordinator of school-community relations. The superintendent was encouraged to lead his staff in improving the public relations program, and principals were encouraged to assume responsibility at the building level. Both teachers and nonteaching personnel employed by the school were admonished to bear in mind that their conduct had a strong influence on the attitudes of both students and lay citizens toward the schools (8).

A survey of school administrators in the Milton Area School System in Pennsylvania was undertaken to determine the degree to which educational progress in school districts was attributed to the use of public relations programs and the understanding of the power structure of the community (7). This study concluded that, while it was possible for an educational program to advance with or without the use of a public relations program, an educational program can advance much more rapidly with the assistance of a planned public relations program.

A national study attempting to identify the most successful techniques in public relations programs utilized data gathered from library research, a questionnaire, and a survey (2). Twelve nationally recognized specialists in public relations responded to the questionnaire, and the presidents of National School Public Relations Association chapters in 21 States responded to the survey. The study concluded that the teacher is the most important public relations contact that the schools have and that two-way communication between the public and the schools is the most effective method of communication. Commercial techniques of public relations and advertising, the study indicated, could be adapted successfully to school public relations programs. Some techniques of public relations which were identified as being unsuccessful were: (1) The appointment of advisory committees without defining their roles, (2) neglecting to inform the public before making major changes in the school program, (3) unplanned or poorly planned communication attempts between the schools and the groups needed for support, and (4) inservice education meetings which provided for only one-way communication. The study recommended that all school districts evaluate their public image and that boards of education be encouraged to adopt public relations policies. It was also recommended that inservice programs be developed to help all employees of the school system understand their roles in the public relations program.

A survey of a number of school districts in California identified certain trends taking place in public relations programs (4). Most public relations programs are organized to meet specific needs (such as gaining public support for the passage of a school bond issue) rather than providing for a continuous program based on acceptable principles and written policies. More public relations activities are being administered through the office of the superintendent, and public relations functions are being delegated to specialists. The slow development of public relations programs in many school districts has been blamed on lack of funds, lack of recognized need, lack of personnel, and fear of lack of understanding. The study recommended that consultants be used for community analysis and for developing a program and staff to meet the public relation needs of the district.

An interview schedule developed from the literature on public relations was employed in a number of Texas school systems in an effort to determine the effect of school district size on public relations activities (6). The study found differences between large and small school systems in the purposes of their public relations programs, the way they were organized, and the personnel and media used to carry out the programs. The study recommended that all school systems should establish definite purposes for their public relations program and should develop an organizational structure to carry it out. All personnel of the school system as well as agents and agencies outside the schools should be included in the public relations program. Efforts should be made to identify and remove barriers which impede the flow of information about the schools, and efforts should also be made to determine the attitudes and feelings of the people of the community.

A questionnaire developed by Butler was administered to superintendents, principals, teachers, and laymen in a number of school districts in Mississippi in an effort to evaluate local public relations programs (1). In general, the school systems were failing to carry out effective programs of public relations. Many activities considered to have a high value for public relations were not being used in the school systems. Among the media being used for public relations were radio, television, and newspapers. These media, however, lacked proper balance, amount, and interest in programs to meet the total needs of the public. The public relations programs of larger schools were consistently rated higher than those of smaller schools. Universities and consultative services were not being utilized to any great extent.

The public relations programs of a number of city elementary schools in northeastern Ohio were assessed through a questionnaire administered to principals of these schools (3). An analysis of the data indicated that in most schools the principal was the directing agent for public relations and worked closely with community organizations. Two-thirds of the principals were satisfied with their authority over matters concerning public relations. Forty percent, however, did not feel that the superintendent was aware of the scope of their duties. Communication with staff members was extremely limited as indicated by the fact that only one-third of the principals alerted staff members to their responsibilities in the program and only one-fourth discussed public relations at staff meetings. All principals indicated their budgets were inadequate. In fact, less than one-third of the schools acknowledged that they had any funds budgeted for public relations activities. Principals of larger schools made wider use of the school plant, were more secure in having defined roles within the community public relations program, served in schools that were better equipped, and made better use of specific public relations techniques than did principals of smaller schools.

A study of the public relations activities of 12 medium-size school districts in Michigan was undertaken to determine whether or not the present public relations programs had been influential in gaining increased support among voters (12). Six of the schools were in districts which had shown strong support for the schools during the previous 4 years, while the other six were in districts of low support where bond issues and tax measures had been defeated. The results of the study indicated that it is difficult to rely upon public relations activities to change voter attitudes and gain community support and understanding in a short period of time. The greatest problem seemed to be creating the desire among uninformed voters to become informed on school matters. The study also indicated that greater attention needs to be paid to establishing contacts between administrators and the public.

Another Michigan study explored the importance of community organization for school support (10). The findings indicated that the level of support which a community affords its schools is related to the social organization patterns of the community. Support is much more likely among citizens who are members of formal groups such as the PTA, social clubs, and church organizations. Nongroup members who are out of touch with communication media were found to be the most disinterested and exhibit the lowest level of support for the schools.

An inventory of the attitudes of New Jersey school board presidents gives some indication of how school board members feel about school public relations policies and practices (5). Three hundred eighty-six board presidents responded to a list of 76 items compiled from a review of educational literature to indicate their attitudes toward school public relations. The study found that, while the board presidents had favorable attitudes toward school public relations policies and practices in general, they agreed significantly more with policies and practices involving personal interaction than to those which involved distributing information on polling public opinion. The board presidents had favorable attitudes toward publishing the dates and times of school board meetings, informal personal contacts with community members, and polling staff opinion. They were undecided about the use of citizens committees, advisory committees, teacher recruitment brochures, public opion polls, and public meetings on school referendums.

There are a number of instruments which can be employed to evaluate the effectiveness of public relations programs. For example, James Young at Columbia University has developed an instrument which classifies public relations activities into seven major areas. In all, there are 66 items in the inventory which are designed to indicate areas where adequate practices are being performed and where improvement needs to take place. A manual which contains suggested procedures for appraisal and information designed to assist with interpreting the data are included in Young's dissertation (13). Another promising instrument is the Public Relations Program Evaluation Index developed by Kenneth Smith at the University of California. The effectiveness of this instrument was tested on two major samples drawn from the membership of the Public Relations Society of America, Inc. (9). Some practices which are appropriate for the school-community relations programs of public schools are also included in the *Guide to Public Relations for Junior Colleges* (11).

Conclusions and Implications

Among the more important conclusions of these studies of school public relations were the following:

1. The responsibility of public relations programs is primarily vested in the school administration. The superintendent has the major responsibility at the school district level, while principals are responsible at the building level.
2. Most public relations programs are organized to meet specific needs rather than providing for a continuous program.
3. Too little time and money are allocated for public relations activities.
4. The social organizational pattern of a community affects the level of support for the schools.
5. Larger schools and those located in urban areas and large cities had better public relations programs, more and better equipment and facilities which could be used in public relations programs, and school principals who were better prepared to conduct public relations programs than did smaller schools and those located in rural areas and smaller cities.
6. Most communication in public relations programs was inadequate. There was not enough two-way communication between the schools and the community, and much of the communication that existed did not deal with the most relevant topics. There was a definite tendency for communication from the schools to be selective in that only one side of an issue was presented to the public.
7. Superintendents and school board members expressed favorable attitudes toward school public relations but placed more emphasis on personal interaction (informal communication) than on distributing information and polling opinion.
8. Sufficient use was not made of the professional and nonprofessional employees of the school system in public relations programs.

The recommendations of the studies reviewed imply that:

1. School boards should adopt statements of basic policy for public relations, and programs should be developed to carry out the adopted policies.
2. Public relations programs should be organized to include: (1) a top-level administrative officer who would have major responsibility for directing the public relations program of the school system, (2) the assignment of public relations responsibility at the building level to the school principals, (3) the maintenance

of a public relations committee to evaluate the program and plan for its improvement, and (4) the involvement of all professional and nonprofessional employees of the school system and the development of inservice training programs to help the staff learn what their public relations responsibilities are.

3. Public relations programs should have adequate financial support with provisions made in the school budget for public relations activities.

4. Efforts should be made to assess the attitudes and feelings of the people in the school community and to determine what their informational needs are.

5. Local school systems should utilize consultants for community analysis, public relations program development, and technical assistance.

6. Public relations programs should attempt to keep the public informed on all matters pertaining to the educational program.

7. Public relations should make use of all available media and use a balanced approach in communicating with the public.

8. Universities should provide courses of study for school public relations specialists and should give increased emphasis to public relations concepts in school administration offerings.

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PREP

No. 7-I

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CONFLICT

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Boards of education represent both teachers and the general public. They have an interest in responding to the desires of the public regarding their schools while at the same time they seek to protect teachers from public pressures. Boards must make accommodation for conflicting points of view. For example, when pressed by the public to keep taxes low, at the same time they are urged by educators to adopt new programs which will increase costs. When a segment of the public takes issue with a decision by the board of education or an administrator in the system, conflict ensues. How this happens, what issues are involved, and how they are resolved is the subject of this report.

Questions

1. What issues are involved in cases where schools and communities are in disagreement?
2. Do communities differ in ability to manage conflict?
3. What characteristics are associated with the ability to manage conflict?
4. What grievances do parents hold against the schools?
5. Is conflict healthy or unhealthy for schools?

Review of Studies

Disagreements between the public school authorities are not uncommon, yet very little systematic research has been undertaken in this area. Much of the work done has used a case study method, so that findings may not be applicable to different situations.

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Conflict in New York City. A type of conflict which has appeared recently is the struggle by minority groups to gain control over schools in the ghetto neighborhoods of large cities. Goldberg's description of some of the issues involved in the controversy over Intermediate School 201 in New York City (6) is an excellent review of some of the issues involved. Negro and Puerto Rican parents in the community served by Intermediate School 201 argued that, because they lacked power and prestige accorded white middle-class parents, they had no influence over decisions relating to the education of their children. They proposed that a community council of residents of the school community be created, and that it have the power to hire and fire teachers and administrators. There was no inclination on the part of the board of education to grant this absolute authority to such a group. Goldberg comments that the board was prepared to accept a boycott at Intermediate 201 in preference to a citywide strike of teachers which they expected to occur had the parent's request been granted.

Teachers in New York City have opposed decentralization of the schools of the city, even though critics feel that such a plan is necessary if the schools are to be responsive to the needs of the communities they serve (5). For one thing, the teachers prefer to bargain with a single centralized authority rather than with individual districts scattered throughout the city. Probably even more important is the fear on the part of teachers that their careers would be in jeopardy if community councils were given the power to hire and fire teachers.

Parents in the New York neighborhood felt that the schools were not held accountable for their performance, that no judgment was forthcoming if a school failed to do a satisfactory job of educating youngsters. To introduce accountability, the parents proposed to develop objective means of evaluation by which teachers could be assessed and, if necessary, replaced. Teachers rejected the suggestion that their performance be judged by laymen; in fact, teachers were generally opposed to any kind of plan in which their performance was rated, even where the evaluation would have been performed by other professionals.

The controversy between parents and educators in New York City is unique in that the parents sought to gain absolute authority over the operation in schools in their neighborhoods. However, many of the issues in dispute were basically the same ones which appeared in other settings. The question of professional autonomy versus lay control of public education is one, for example, which has appeared frequently in disputes between the public and educators.

Conflict in Kenosha, Wisconsin. When the National Education Association is invited by a local affiliate to investigate conditions in a community, it organizes a team of educators to study the situation and publish a report. One such study was undertaken in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in 1966 (1). In that city the board of education and city council had been engaged in a power struggle over a period of several years. The city council had on occasions eliminated or delayed approval on funds for the school budget, and the board of education had responded by cutting back programs popular with the public. This resulted in pressure on the city council to reinstate the school funds. The council had not been successful in persuading the schools to submit a detailed budget and accused the schools of submitting padded budget figures. The school board argued that the council demands to see detailed budget figures was an intrusion into the board's realm of authority.

In early 1966 the National Education Association and its State affiliate organized a joint study committee composed of seven educators to investigate the Kenosha situation. The committee found that Kenosha ranked high among cities of comparable size in per-capita expenditures for education and discovered no evidence that budget cuts imposed by city council had damaged the educational program of the city. Both the city council and the board of education were rebuked for failure to meet their responsibilities. The committee suggested that providing the city council with the detailed budget figures as requested would not be a violation of the board's autonomy. The committee said that an adequate expenditure budget request should include a statement of the general objectives of the school system for the year, a description of each program in which a request was made for increased expenditures, and a justification of such increases along with a statement of the funds needed to meet the needs of each of the programs to be operated by the board of education for the year.

Situations where conflict is likely. Conflict is more likely to occur where two parties hold roughly equal shares of power. Where the power is distributed in such a way that one party has a slight chance of winning in a showdown, he will usually avoid open conflict. Professional education groups have recognized this fact recently and have begun to take actions which would increase the share of power they hold in situations where there is a dispute between the schools and a community. For example, organized action by teachers represents a recognition of the power to be gained by unified action. Another way by which a professional group can enhance its power in a local dispute is by calling in State or national groups to support its case. This is usually done prior to invoking sanctions or calling a strike. The greater prestige and resources of the State and national bodies and the implicit threat to community leaders concerned with national exposure strengthen the hand of the educational group.

Much of the research into conflict between social groups involves the concept of consensus or agreement. An agency or organization such as a board of education operates in a climate of expectations. That is, the people in a community hold certain beliefs about how a board of education should operate and what positions it should take on critical issues. In turn, the expectations an individual holds are influenced in large measure by his associations and status. Theoretically, conflict is less likely to occur where the various groups in a community are in agreement both within and among themselves in expectations they hold for the board of education.

Lipham and his colleagues (10) found that, in the 12 Wisconsin school districts they studied, it was in fact true that extent of controversy in a community was related to the level of consensus on the role of the school board. They found that parents whose children attended private or parochial schools tended to hold different expectations for the board of education than did parents whose children were in the public schools.

Four groups were studied in the Lipham research. They were citizens, public officials, teachers, and school board members. Citizens held the highest degree of consensus regarding the school board role; and, surprisingly, school board members showed the least agreement. When the groups were asked to judge the importance of the school board in making various kinds of decisions, the board members themselves again attached less importance to the school board than did the other three groups. School board members attributed to the superintendent of schools most of the responsibilities which citizens, teachers, and public officials assigned to the board of education. These findings suggest that school board members see themselves as wielding less authority than other community groups believe that they have and suggest further that board members do not agree among themselves about what their proper role should be.

Types of conflict between school and community. Minar (11) sought to answer the question as to why some communities exhibit lower levels of conflict than other communities. He theorized that the reason might be that low-conflict communities are better able to manage conflict because of the presence in the community of persons with a high level of skill in organization, personal communications, and human relations. He reasoned that these skills would be more likely to exist in a group of well-educated and well-to-do persons. Subsequent investigation confirmed the theory that communities in which more people are well educated and hold high status have less conflict and also exhibit more skill in conflict management.

Snow (14) investigated the implications of Minar's findings for the role of the superintendent. Four Illinois suburban communities were studied, and the object of his research was to identify factors which affect superintendents' roles.

Probably the most common type of conflict between school and community involves parents who hold specific grievances regarding practices in a school attended by their children. Such disagreements often involve minor issues and problems. Frequently these never come to the attention of school authorities. Of those which do, probably most are resolved quickly. Despite the frequent occurrence of such conflict, however, there has been relatively little systematic research into this phenomenon. Jennings' (8) study in this area is one of the few in the literature. A national sample of parents with children in public and private schools was asked whether their children had ever been told things in any of their classes with which the parent disagreed, whether anything had happened to their child at school within the past 2 or 3 years which upset the parent. Some interesting findings emerged from this study. One finding was that parental grievances were not distributed equally among schools. Some schools received more than their share of parental complaints, while others had none. It was not clear whether the reason for this difference was that some schools actually give parents more reason for complaining or that some groups of parents are simply more prone to complain. Jennings found no relationship between participation in PTA and frequency of grievance-holding parents.

The nature of the complaints held by the parents was also investigated. Most frequently complaints about something the child was taught involved the areas of morals and religion or politics. Parents who complained about moral or religious teaching were more likely to hold fundamentalist religious orientations, and parents who complained about teaching in the area of politics were more likely to be interested in governmental affairs. Less than half of the parents who reported holding grievances with the school made any attempt to alleviate the conditions which gave rise to their complaints.

School consolidation has been the source of much of the conflict between school authorities and the public, and it continues to be an issue of contention despite general agreement that larger schools are more efficient and able to offer better educational programs. Jonassen (9) studied conflict over school consolidation in a Norwegian community. He concluded that opposition to consolidation grew out of the two basic personality needs of the people--self-esteem and self-orientation. His findings suggest that to the residents of small communities the removal of a school suggests loss of identity and the passing of a familiar and pleasant way of life. Rural residents, he believes, are fearful of the urbanized socity, which they perceive as threatening their value systems and self-esteem. Despite the attempt by opponents of consolidation to phrase their arguments in rational, economic terms, Jonassen concluded that the real source of their opposition was emotional rather than rational.

Communities which experience rapid growth in population frequently encounter strains which emerge as conflicts between various groups in the community. Goldhammer and Farner (7) investigated a situation in Oregon in which rapid growth of a metropolitan area had caused spillover into an adjacent rural county. The strains created by this rapid growth, along with conflicts between the old and new residents of the county raised problems for the school system which required several years to resolve.

Members of boards of education are in a position in which they are subject to conflicting cross-pressures which they must somehow resolve. The public, for example, expects the board to practice economy in order to keep taxes low, while the superintendent pushes for new programs which increase educational costs. The course of action adopted by a particular board on any one issue is dependent on a number of factors. The board's vulnerability is one such factor. Dumond (4) analyzed the effects of public pressure on decisions of boards of education in school districts of Arizona. He concluded that public pressure does influence the decisions which are made by boards of education, that recent curricular revisions in the Arizona schools were due in part to public pressure, and that there appeared to be a growing feeling on the part of citizens that school costs are too high. The response by school authorities to public pressure was found to be due, at least in part, to the authorities' perception of the legitimacy of the demands. Lack of communication between the school and community appeared to result in greater community pressure.

Not much is known about the effects of controversy on the public schools. Generally educators take a position similar to that held by Nussel (13) that conflict is unhealthy for education, while admitting that it may be useful in other settings in democratic societies. Much study remains to be done regarding the kinds of conflict between school and community and the effects of such conflict on the educational program.

Conclusions and Implications

The effort by community groups to secure greater control over neighborhood schools in urban areas promises to continue to produce conflict between school authorities and teachers on the one hand and the public on the other. It seems unlikely that boards of education will grant the absolute authority that some community groups are seeking, but it is likely that there will be movement in the direction of greater decentralization in many of the large cities.

Four findings have emerged from the research into role expectations for board members which appear to have important implications. (1) There is likely to be less conflict in communities where the people hold similar expectations of the board of education. (2) Board members show a very low level of agreement among themselves as to what should be expected of them. (3) Board members see themselves as wielding less authority than the public believes them to have. (4) Communities which possess rich human resources are better able to manage conflict when it occurs and thus experience less disruption from it. It appears that a board of education might be able to take the lead in educating the public as to the board's role and authority. Such an educative process might reduce the disparities in expectations which appear to produce conflict between school and community. It might be fruitful also for boards of education and other community agencies to develop training programs to help people acquire the skills which are useful in resolving conflict.

Rapid population growth appears to produce strains in a community which often erupt into conflict involving the schools. This fact might serve to forewarn boards of education in such areas of the need for careful and imaginative planning for future needs and of the need to involve the citizens of the community to as great an extent as possible in the board's decisions.

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CURRENT
RESEARCH
FOR BOARD
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No. 7-J

The following documents recently entered into the ERIC system should be helpful to school board members in their decision-making roles. Copies of these documents are available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), The National Cash Register Company, 4936 Fairmont Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland 20014. Listed with each citation is the identifying number, the number of pages, and the cost of ordering it either in microfiche (MF) or hard copy (HC).

The Public Image of the School Board Role. ED 026 712. 14 p. MF - 25¢; HC - 80¢.

A Model for School Board Operation. ED 026 723. 19 p. MF - 25¢; HC - $1.05.

The Superintendent-Board Relationship. ED 025 007. 64 p. MF - 50¢; HC - $3.30.

Improving Racial Balance and Intergroup Relations: An Advisory Report to the Board of Education; Inglewood Unified School District. ED 025 571. 91 p. MF - 50¢; HC - $4.65.

A Bibliography of Empirical Studies of School Boards, 1952-1968. ED 024 136. 24 p. MF - 25¢; HC - $1.30.

School Board Member Characteristics and Fiscal Responsibility. ED 023 154. 8 p. MF - 25¢; HC - 50¢.

Board Members, the Public, and Fiscal Welfare of School Districts. ED 023 150. 7 p. MF - 25¢; HC - 45¢.

The School-Community Coordinating Team. ED 023 706. 104 p. MF - 50¢; HC - $5.30.

An Experiment in School-Community Relations. ED 023 726. 18 p. MF - 25¢; HC - $1.00.

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